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TRANSFORMING CHURCHES, TRANSFORMING LIVES
God is still speaking, y'all!
Southeast Conference
UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST

(as of December 8, 2015)
125 Ellis Street NE
Atlanta, Georgia 30303
Phone: 404.607.1993

Jottings from June: February 1, 2016

As we complete the work of closing the financial records for 2015, I find myself reflecting on themes of generosity and abundance. I am so grateful to all the churches and individuals that contributed to the ministry of the Southeast Conference. The monetary gifts are important to under-gird and sustain the expenses associated with our ministry. I also am grateful for all the hours that individuals in this Conference devote to their local church and the ministry of the Conference.

Much of that time is sacrificial giving as people choose to be engaged as ministry volunteers when there are things they could be doing with and for family, chores that need to be done, errands that need to be taken care of, and who among us couldn't use a little more time for rest and relaxation. Yet many show up to meetings, drive long distances, spend hours on the computer for web meetings, devote time to writing reports and committee emails. Jesus says, "I brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do." (John 17:4). The labor of the faithful is a gift and blessing that sustains ministry as much as, and possibly even more than, the dollars that are invested in the ministry. We can all write a check and support a good organization but when we invest ourselves, our very being, in our ministry, we are giving the gift of life for the life of the church.

Anytime we give, we will reap God's bounty. We know we serve an abundant God, but we also serve a generous church. Scholarship applications are open for the Brown Endowment to provide resources for those studying for ministry. Amber Kirkendoll, pastor at Safe Harbor Family Church in Flowood, Mississippi, is a 2016 Brown Scholar receiving a generous grant toward her studies. The 55 churches of the Southeast Conference make up about 1% of the total congregations in the entire United Church of Christ, yet we have five Neighbors in Need grant recipients in our Conference—Open Table, Mobile; Church of the Savior, Knoxville; Praxis, Americus; Unity Montgomery; and Circular, Charleston. In addition, we have given out 12 local church grants from the Transforming Churches, Transforming Lives capital campaign and the next round of applications is open. All of the gifts are possible only because you and others gave so generously to special offerings and Our Churches Wider Mission and in support of the Conference.

Allow me to imitate Paul from 1 Thessalonians 1:1-3:

> *All you servants of the church,*
>
> *To the churches of the Southeast Conference in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:*
>
> *Grace to you and peace. We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

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